

Module 2: Planning

Indicator 2

Goal:

My goal is to develop and organize coherent and relevant units, lessons and learning tasks that build on students' prior knowledge, skills and interests and engage students in their work. I hope to further promote students' independence and consistently incorporate higher level learning of skills and concepts. I wish to actively engage students to think critically, creatively and solve problems by using strategic questions for discourse and inquiry based learning and to make real world connections. I hope to further learn and employ strategies and techniques that the CLASS tool looks for so that I can plan with those in mind. I also want to learn more strategies that will help me plan with the cycle of intentional teaching and an emergent curriculum in mind.

Initial Summary:

Currently in my teaching practice I have been planning mostly based on themes. I have mainly been choosing themes based on what season it is, for example during Autumn we completed apple and pumpkin themes. In winter we covered penguins and snow themes. I have also been picking themes based on upcoming events, for example we had a farm field trip planned so we did a farm theme for the week before and the week after the trip to both get ready for the trip and the reflect on it afterwards.

I also have been planning by developing activities to target specific objectives in Teaching Strategies Gold that I haven't observed yet for the marking period and plan activities that would increase the likelihood of students exhibiting that skill or concept. For example for the objective looking for sorting skills I had sorters and sorting bowls out at math center, at art center children were picking a color then sorting out items that same color from our collage bin to work with, and in dramatic play kitchen there were containers to sort the pretend fruits and vegetables by color.

I am looking forward to learning more about the CLASS tool which will help me to plan lessons that allow for and promote learning through strategic open ended questions, asking about students' thinking, and making connections to their home life. I want to gain more strategies that will help me plan with the cycle of intentional teaching in mind so that I can more readily know what my students have already done and how to further scaffold their learning to achieve the next steps. I also want to think more deeply about planning with an emergent curriculum in mind and being more child focused in seeing what their interests and needs are and following their lead. I think I will see more on-task and engaged learners if activities and lessons are planned with the individual

children's interests in mind, and perhaps even more so if they are part of the planning process as well.

Body:

I am planning a unit on plants, planting and things that grow. I chose this topic for a unit because I noticed several students are interested in it. As part of my goal I am trying to plan with an Emergent Curriculum in mind and follow the students' lead with topics and the learning taking place. So when I saw students who were searching for and picking dandelions out on the playground, I started asking them if this was something they would want to learn more about, and they said yes. Each day outside I noticed more and more students joining in. Another reason I chose this topic is we have a Spider plant in our classroom which has been sparking some behaviors. I have one student who has a habit of pulling the leaves off the plant, and other students hide behind the plant. By hearing about plants and how to keep plants healthy, it could be possible to engage their curiosity in a more positive way. Also, one of our classroom helper jobs is watering the spider plant (which the students are always excited to do), but we have never really talked about why this job is so important. I believe that following the students' lead on picking the topic for the unit will positively impact my students because it is something that they are interested in, and when they are interested and engaged in the study at hand I notice there are a lot less behavior issues. When there are less behavior issues there is more time for teachers to facilitate learning and more children on task. I believe that encouraging children's natural curiosity is a positive and productive enterprise. I read in NAEYC's article titled The Emergence of Emergent Curriculum by Elizabeth Jones that "emergent curriculum focuses on the process of learning. The more standardized the curriculum, the less children's individual needs are met and the more likely it is that many children will fall behind. Children have diverse strengths. Early childhood educators, granted the flexibility to do so, can build on those strengths and on passionate interests as they help children construct genuine knowledge for themselves and practice empathy and respect for their fellow learners."

Now that I had my topic for a unit I sat down with my assessment data to plan developmentally appropriate activities to meet all of my students' needs. At my school we use Teaching Strategies Gold to assess the children and it creates a class profile which I can refer to and I can see if each child is at age level or not for each standard. The main standards I will be observing for in all activities of this unit are Objective 24: Uses scientific inquiry skills and Objective 25: Demonstrates knowledge of the characteristics of living things. For these standards my class breaks up pretty easily into 2 groups, half being at age level and the other half struggling more. To meet the needs of my children, I will differentiate. By having different Bloom's Taxonomy leveled questions ready to meet each student where they are and facilitate learning. I will plan each lesson with the 2 groups and the theory of intentional teaching in mind. I read the introduction to The Intentional Teacher by Ann S. Epstein and in it she writes "intentional teaching means systematically introducing content, in all domains, using developmentally based methods and respecting children's modes of learning." This will be important to do in order to reach all of my students where they are at.

Science activities seem to naturally lend themselves to have students think critically with inquiry based questions and making real world connections. As I read more about the CLASS tool, I decided to enhance my lessons with many of the strategies in the Instructional Support component of the protocol. I will be able to easily connect planting activities to the child's home life, previous school experiences, and make real world connections. With science activities there is always new vocabulary to learn with which to repeat and extend children's thoughts. There will be lots of room for open ended questions and predicting what will happen then observing what does happen. I will also keep Bloom's taxonomy and the hierarchy of questioning in mind while planning questions. I believe that by implementing these strategies I will be able to scaffold the children's learning while limiting behavior issues since the unit is following their interests.

Lesson Plan

Day 1

Group 1

1. I will show the group a packet of green bean seeds and ask Bloom's taxonomy level of application questions such as "What will we need to help these beans grow?" I will also have in my bag a picture of a sun, a watering can, and a bag of soil and as each item gets mentioned I will take them out and discuss further and ask "Why do you think it will help our plant grow? How do you know?" I will ask the group "Have you ever planted anything before? Tell me about it. How is this planting the same as when you planted before?" to spark discussion.
2. I then will show the group our KWL chart and we will fill out the K section: What do you Know about planting? I will record each child's ideas on the chart.
3. I will then ask the group "Would you like to plant your own seeds today and help them grow?" Then the children will be able to plant a green bean seed in a cup of soil and water it.

Group 2

1. I will have in my bag a picture of a sun, a watering can, a bag of soil and a packet of green bean seeds and as I present each item during our group discussion I will ask Bloom's knowledge/recall questions and give prompts like "Can you name this? Have you seen this before? When? Why do you think I have that in my bag? What could we use this for? Have you ever planted anything before? Tell me about it. What will we need to help these beans grow?" I will ask questions and give prompts/hints to help them discover a plant needs all of those things to grow.
2. I then will show the group our KWL chart and we will fill out the K section: What do you Know about planting? I will record each child's ideas on the chart.
3. I will then ask the group "Would you like to plant your own seeds today and help them grow?" Then the children will be able to plant a green bean seed in a cup of soil and water it.

Day 2

Group 1

1. We will check on our beans growing in the soil and water them. I will ask questions like "What do you see happening? What do you think will happen next?"
2. We will then brainstorm what we Want to know about planting to fill out the W section of our chart
3. Then I will talk about how books are a tool we use to learn new things so we might answer some of our questions when we read our book for today, One Bean. We will then read the book.
4. As part of the transition to centers I will ask each student if they learned anything new from the book they didn't know before to add to our L section of the chart (What did you learn?)
5. At centers time we will be putting the green beans in baggies with a wet paper towel then taping the bags to our window.

Group 2

1. We will check on our beans growing in the soil and water them. I will ask questions like "What do you see happening? Do you remember what we did yesterday? Can you name what a plant needs to grow? Are our plants getting everything they need to grow?"
2. We will then brainstorm what we Want to know about planting to fill out the W section of our chart. . I will prompt if needed by recalling things we noticed interest in during Day 1 because they may want to learn more about those things.
3. Then I will talk about how books are a tool we use to learn new things so we might answer some of our questions when we read our book for today, One Bean. We will try to read the book, if interest is not there we will picture walk through the book, and then I will model for the children by pointing out things that I "learned" while reading the book which I will add to section L of KWL chart.
4. As part of the transition to centers I will ask each student if they learned anything new they didn't know before to add to our L section of the chart (What did you learn?)
5. At centers time we will be putting the green beans in baggies with a wet paper towel then taping the bags to our window.

Day 3

Group 1

1. We will compare how our green bean is growing in the soil next to how the beans in the baggies in the window are doing. I will record the children's observations.
2. The children will draw what they see happening in their experience journals as well as write some of the words they are saying to describe what they see (I will bring out our plant themed vocab cards for them to look at as they write).

Group 2

1. We will compare how our green bean is growing in the soil next to how the beans in the baggies are doing. I will start the discussion by modeling and saying some of the things that I notice and ask if they see that too, and what else do you see?
2. I will have the students draw in their experience journals what they see.

Following Week:

We will have another opportunity to add to the L section of our chart (which is What did we Learn about planting) after we observed plants growing, had discussions on observations the children have made and after we have read several books about plants/planting such as Grow, Flower, Grow, A Tiny Seed, and The Carrot Seed.

Interest Centers for the Week

Dramatic Play- Flower Shop

Math- Counting seeds on trays with number correspondence cards to match to the amount counted.

Writing- Word cards with planting vocabulary (ex- root, stem, flower, petal, etc.) with crayons and lined paper

Construction- Building gardens and farms with the blocks. Add pictures to walls to model.

Sensory table- Bird seed with magnifying glasses

Science- White carnations in colored water experiment

Playdough table- Chocolate (brown) playdough with silk flowers so children can "plant" a garden (work on patterning)

Easel- Painting on cut outs of flowers

Art- Collage onto flower cutouts, Painting with flowers, Tissue paper squares on sticky paper cut out in the shape of a flower (stained glass effect)

In conclusion, the impact I anticipate this lesson having for my students is that they will practice their inquiry and observation skills as well as learn through their interests. I believe that I will be able to support my students to be able to get to their age level for Objectives 24 and 25. My students will learn more about plants and planting than just dandelions on the playground and they will learn ways to help plants grow, as well as what will hurt the plants. They also will hopefully make the connection of why we need a classroom helper who waters our classroom plants each week and why that is important. I believe I can meet them at their level and can scaffold their learning to reach the next through preplanned open-ended questions based off Bloom's Taxonomy. From the research on Emergent Curriculum, teaching with intentionality and the CLASS tool I feel I have learned better ways to plan units and better ways to reach out to the students and teach to their level and interest. I haven't included students in the process of planning before. I expect by asking them what would they want to learn about, and recording it on the W section of the KWL chart, I will be able to plan future activities and

learning based on their questions and wonderings. I felt before like I had to be "the teacher" and have "the plan" with all the ideas coming from me and answer all the questions, but now I see that including the students in the planning process is beneficial in many ways. I hope that my class will be able to carry the fascination of planting to finish the unit and we will go as far as they continue showing interest and learning through it. I hope to model through this unit life long learning skills, skills that are not just being used for our planting activities.